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IT'S OFFICIAL, GENERAL ELECTIONS IN PAKISTAN WILL BE HELD ON FEB 8

The election commission had earlier proposed that the polling be held on Feb 11, but the schedule was advanced after a meeting with President Arif Alvi

ELECTION DATE HELPS PAKISTAN FOR IMF LOAN

The announcement coincides with the beginning of negotiations between Pakistan and the IMF for the release of second tranche of a $3 billion loan to stabilise its economy. The main fight in the polls is between Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) chief Nawaz Sharif and jailed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf boss Imran Khan. PPP's Bilawal Bhutto also fancies his chances

SUPREME COURT FIAT SENT CEC TO PRESIDENT

- On the order of the Supreme Court, the Chief Election Commissioner along with the Attorney General and four members of the electoral body met President Alvi to discuss the general elections date
- The poll body had begun redrawing constituencies based on the new census data, which was why the elections were delayed

$710 mn

OF IMF LOAN IS WHAT PAKISTAN IS SEEKING IN ITS LATEST TALKS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Drama as Moitra walks out of LS panel meet

Opposition members allege she was asked filthy questions; committee may call another meet to adopt its report

PREETHA NAIR @New Delhi

THERE was high drama at a meeting of the Ethics Committee of the Lok Sabha on Thursday, as Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra and her Opposition colleagues stormed out of it alleging she was being posed 'filthy questions'.

However, panel chairman and BJP MP Vinod Sonkar refuted the claims and charged that Moitra boycotted the meeting to evade questioning and 'misbehaved' during the meeting.

"Opposition members also made allegations in anger and boycotted to evade questions. Objectionable words used against the panel and me," said Sonkar. It is learnt that the panel may soon call another meeting to adopt its report.

The committee is probing BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's allegations that Moitra accepted bribes for raising questions in Parliament on behalf of business tycoon Darshan Hiranandani. On October 26, the committee heard Dubey and SC lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai on their allegations against Moitra. The MPs who

Mahua Moitra reacts to a reporter's question during her walkout | PTI

walked out of the meeting along with Moitra were Congress's Uttam Kumar Reddy and V Vaithilingam, BSP's Danish Ali, CPM's P R Natarajan and JD(U)'s Giridhari Yadav.

Moitra then wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, saying that she was subjected to the proverbial *Vastraharan* (disrobing) by the committee chairman. "I repeatedly protested on record that while the Chairman was welcome to ask me any question relevant to the inquiry — namely on the login and on those allegations of gifts for which evidence, or rather complete lack of it, existed he could not ask me detailed personal questions making insinuations about my dignity as a woman," she said.

In his pushback, Dubey said the Opposition targeted the panel chairman as he belongs to a Scheduled Caste.

SEEKS LS RULES ON SHARING LOGIN ACCESS

Moitra requested the LS Secretariat to disclose the rules governing the sharing of login and password of the portal to merely type out questions. "Why were these rules never given to MPs and if they were, why is every single MP sharing this ID and login with numerous people?" she asked

EXCISE POLICY

Kejriwal skips ED date, faults its summons

ANUP VERMA @New Delhi

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday failed to appear before the Enforcement Directorate and instead sent a letter to the agency stating that its summons is "vague, motivated and unsustainable in law". He demanded its recall.

Kejriwal flew off to Madhya Pradesh for election campaign. He said the summons was politically motivated and to prevent him from campaigning in poll-bound states.

The ED had summoned Kejriwal for questioning in the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy case and to record his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. His party colleagues Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh are in custody in the case. Sisodia was recently denied bail by the Supreme Court.

"The said summons is not clear as to the capacity in which I am being summoned i.e. as a witness or a suspect in the above-mentioned case... (It) does not specify whether I am being summoned as an individual or in my official capacity as Chief Minister of Delhi or as National Convenor of AAP and appears to be in the nature of a fishing and roving inquiry," his letter to the ED read.

An individual can at best ignore the ED's summons thrice. After that the agency can seek a non-bailable arrest warrant against him/her.

The ED says the excise policy allowed cartelisation and favoured certain dealers in exchange for bribes, a charge refuted by the AAP. The policy was ly scrapped and the Delhi Lt governor recommended a CBI probe, following which the ED registered a case under the PMLA.

WITH THIS ISSUE
CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE
40 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

Mohammed Shami celebrates after taking five wickets against Sri Lanka on Thursday. India beat SL by 302 runs | PTI

SHAMI-STAR AS INDIA QUICK MARCH INTO LAST FOUR

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN @Mumbai

WERE you also amazed? You wouldn't be alone. In a bowling performance that will find its way into highlight reels for the next few decades, India blew Sri Lanka by 302 runs to become the first team to advance to the semifinal of the World Cup. The hostile hot and humid conditions were no deterrent for either the batters or bowlers. This wasn't just any ordinary performance as much as a statement. A warning shot to the other rivals, including South Africa who they face next in Kolkata on Sunday. The win means the hosts can finish no lower than third place on the table after the completion of the group stage. After winning seven on the bounce, they are now 14 points, two ahead of the Proteas.

"Very happy knowing that we have officially qualified now," Rohit Sharma told the broadcaster after the game. "This was our goal. The way we approached these seven games, it was quite clinical." It's possible that the skipper has undersold the performances of his charges. The way they have won the seven games is reminiscent of the way the all-conquering Australian side won the event in 2007. In terms of margin, the closest is the four-wicket win they had over New Zealand at Dharamsala. But even that match was effectively over long before the final ball was bowled.

That sort of domination was in force at the Wankhede on Thursday. After they were asked to bat, all three of Virat Kohli (88), Shubman Gill (92) and Shreyas Iyer (82), who put on a six-hitting exhibition, came up with big contributions to lift the side to 357.

It always tends to do a bit under the lights at this ground so Rohit was delighted that they would be bowling second. This is a bowling line-up designed to extract whatever movement is on offer. That's what all three of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Mohammed Shami did on a night when they were pretty close to flawless. While Shami was the hero again with another fifer (he is now the country's leading wicket-taker in World Cups), Bumrah started the show with a wicket of the first ball. Less than 20 overs later, the stamp of approval was visible. P15

ICC MEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP INDIA 2023

EXPRESS READ

Kerala moves SC against delay in assent to bills

New Delhi: The Kerala government has moved the Supreme Court claiming that Governor Arif Mohammed Khan was delaying in giving assent to bills passed by the state assembly | P5

Electoral bonds: SC seeks data on donations

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Election Commission to produce before it in sealed cover data of funds received by political parties through electoral bonds till Sept 30 | P9

India, US 2+2 meeting likely on November 9

New Delhi: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will be in New Delhi for the '2+2' meeting, likely on Nov 9, with EAM S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

I will continue as CM for five years, asserts Siddu

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR @Hosapete

A day after AICC general secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala warning disciplinary action against ministers, MLAs and Congress functionaries going public on sharing power in the government, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asserted that he will head the government for five years.

This statement assumes significance in the wake of ministers and MLAs belonging to the factions of Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar making frequent claims that their leader will lead the government soon.

Enthused by the firm backing of the party's high command, Siddaramaiah on Thursday said, "Presently, I am the CM and will continue as CM for five years."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah arrives at MSPL Aerodrome near Koppal on Thursday

Siddaramaiah told reporters here that the question of change in leadership would not arise at all. The BJP is spreading rumours in this regard. People of the state have given a clear mandate to the Congress and its government will remain stable for five years, he said.

"If somebody speaks about change in leadership, it should not be taken seriously. All decisions will be taken by the party high command. There is no confusion in our party. All MLAs and leaders are happy with the party's decisions," he said.

Asked whether there will be three DCMs, he said the Congress is not a regional party and any decision in this regard will be taken by its high command.

Reacting to BJP MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi's prediction that the Congress government will soon collapse, he said with 135 assembly seats, the Congress will rule the state for five years. MORE: P4

K'taka on high alert, Zika in C'ballapur mosquito samples

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

KARNATAKA is now on high alert after detection of Zika virus in mosquito samples at Talakayalabetta village in Chikkaballapur district.

The health department has sent blood samples of 30 pregnant women and four others, suspected to be suffering from Zika fever, for tests.

With the state recording a spike in dengue cases in July, August and September, the health department collected random samples of mosquitoes from 100 places in various districts. Of the samples, six were from Chikkaballapur district. One of the six samples of the aedes aegypti mosquito tested positive for Zika virus, according to a report released by National Institute of Virology (NIV), Bengaluru unit, on October 18.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao told TNIE that tests were being done in view of the increasing number of dengue cases in the state. However, no person has been tested positive for the virus so far. The virus was found only in the mosquito. "The department is closely monitoring the situation. People with fever, skin rashes and other symptoms are being admitted in hospitals and their samples are being sent for tests," he said. CONTINUED ON: P3

Shortfall in rice output may hit Siddu's Anna Bhagya scheme

BANSY KALAPPA @Bengaluru

THE overall rice production in the country is down by about nine percent. This is bad news for the Karnataka government, which is struggling to procure rice for its ambitious Anna Bhagya scheme. If market forces prevail, Karnataka would have to pay through its nose during this distress period.

Paddy growers, who usually sell their produce soon after its harvest, seem to have adopted a wait and watch policy now. The reason is rice output in Karnataka is expected to be down by almost 14%, according to experts and prices are expected to increase sharply. "In this uncertain situation, no rice miller comes forward to buy. The shortfall may lead to further increase in the prices of rice," FKCCI president Ramesh Lahoti said.

According to the Food Corporation of India, it procured only 103 lakh tonnes of rice till October 31 compared to 114 lakh tonnes procured during the same period last year, a shortfall of 11 lakh tonnes.

The state-wise figures indicated that of the large rice producing states, Punjab recorded the sharpest decline. The annual rice procurement dropped to 62.47 lakh tonnes, a decline of about 13%. The procurement in Tamil Nadu dipped by a whopping 41% to 3.06 lakh tonnes.

Former FCI chairman DV Prasad said there is a substantial dip in rice production owing to nature's vagaries. P4

Desert storms aiding carbon sequestration in Arabian Sea: Study

BALA CHAUHAN @Bengaluru

NATURE has a unique way of synchronisation and maintaining a sustainable equilibrium within its own ecosystem.

Deserts, which are considered barren and a challenge for human habitation, contribute significantly in making oceans productive and turning them into carbon sinks with their dust. The desert dust carries rich micronutrients and trace metals that help in carbon sequestration.

In a first of its kind study conducted on the basis of satellite imagery and isotopic work by the CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Dona Paula, Goa, in 2020, ocean scientists discovered that the dust particles collected over the Arabian Sea confirmed the influence of dust storms from Saudi Arabia and Iran.

"Dust particles carried by the wind over the deserts are an essential contributor of nutrients and trace metals to the microscopic surface-dwelling plants -- the phytoplankton -- in the global ocean, which in turn naturally help in controlling atmospheric CO2," Director of CSIR-NIO and ocean scientist Sunil Kumar Singh told TNIE.

He said that despite its significance, the overall impact of dust deposition on the Arabian Sea is not well understood and the biogeochemical modellers often rely upon qualitative parameterisation of dust source regions -- from Saudi Arabia, Iran to Thar desert -- based on satellite remote sensing products.

According to ocean researchers, the process of dust transport and its impact on the Arabian Sea occurs during summer. It was believed that the air parcels transported to the Arabian Sea during winter are mainly dominated by the smoke particles (that is, soot, sulphates and nitrates).

"Although surrounded by several land masses, it was not clear which dust source is most likely contributing to mineral aerosols over the Arabian Sea during winter. It was during one of our expeditions onboard Research Vessel Sindhu Sadhana, as part of the Indian effort towards the GEOTRACES Programme that the NIO researchers encountered two specific dust storm events over the Arabian Sea," Singh said.

GEOTRACES is an international programme, which aims to improve the understanding of biogeochemical cycles and large-scale distribution of trace elements and their isotopes in the marine environment. Scientists from 35 countries, including India, have been involved in the programme, which is designed to study all major global ocean basins.

"The first dust storm sampled over the Arabian Sea on January 27, 2020, was found to have originated from Saudi Arabia. In contrast, the second dust storm sampled after two weeks, on February 10, was found to have been from Iran and the Indo-Gangetic Plain," he said. CONTINUED ON: P10